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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 004347

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SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE EDELMAN MEETS WITH PM
JAAFARI

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David M. Satterfield for reasons 1.4 (a), (b), and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP) Eric Edelman and LTG Victor Renuart, Director of Strategic Plans and Policy, met with Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari at his office on October 18. They discussed the ongoing development of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Jaafari stressed that it is critical for Iraq to continue to develop its security capacity along with its political and economic capacities if the progress already made is to continue. Iraq will continue to look to the U.S. for assistance with this, Jaafari added. In the fight against terrorism, Jaafari said, it is critical that we continue to work together -- for if the U.S. falters in Iraq, it will be a victory for international terrorists. On the economy, Jaafari said that Iraq must cope with its problems and that he would be grateful if the U.S. would use some of its political goodwill with other nations to help obtain debt relief. Steps to help Iraq meet its international financial obligations will be painful, Jaafari said, and U.S. support will be necessary to get past the pain. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) USDP Edelman opened the meeting by thanking Jaafari for receiving his delegation. He explained that he and LTG Renuart had recently assumed their positions and wanted to visit at the earliest opportunity to assess and learn first-hand what is taking place in Iraq. So far, Edelman said, they had visited Mosul, al-Kisik, and Taji to meet with ISF officers and to inspect training facilities. Edelman said that he and Renuart had been impressed by what they had seen.

POLITICAL PROGRESS -- ISF PROGRESS

3. (C) Jaafari replied that USDP Edelman's visit comes at a critical moment following the referendum, as it would allow Edelman to see how the situation in Iraq is evolving and would put this year's progress into context. Jaafari proudly reviewed how, since January 2005, Iraq has held a democratic election, formed and installed a new government, and drafted a constitution that was put to the people in a referendum whose security was provided by the ISF. And, Jaafari added, in less than two months the fourth major political milestone will be attained: the election of a permanent government. Iraq's progress on security is evident, the PM said, from the ISF's performance in ensuring a safe environment for the referendum.

4. (C) Jaafari added that Iraq would like to continue to formulate stronger plans to build its security forces. The quietness of the referendum, he warned, does not mean that the threat has gone away. Further, he continued, the strength and capabilities of the ISF are not just an Iraqi issue; it concerns the U.S. and the region as well. Jaafari said that the growth of the ISF must not be seen in the limited context of Iraq's own fight against terrorists but in the broader context of the global war on terror. In addition, the PM noted, the success of democracy in Iraq is a success for the U.S., and a setback for Iraq is a setback for the U.S. Jaafari said that what has taken place in Iraq has already affected countries in the region such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Lebanon, and others. Even at the international level, he continued, countries such as France and Russia that initially opposed Coalition actions in Iraq now realize what is at stake. Jaafari said that Iraq needs to continue to focus on the type and level of military equipment it needs, the number of people it trains, and the quality of the training received.

ECONOMIC CONCERNS

5. (C) Jaafari said that Iraq has many problems aside from security issues. As the security ministries continue to build capacity, he said, so too must the other government ministries. The PM noted that Iraq has big economic hurdles to clear to secure adequate international financial assistance, and measures taken by the GOI to satisfy international economic requirements might create further challenges for the country. U.S. help, Jaafari said, will be necessary to overcome these hardships. Also, he added, Iraq

is still burdened by international compensation claims, and a full five percent of Iraqi oil revenue goes to pay these claims to Kuwait. Jaafari said that the U.S. should leverage its political goodwill with other countries to give Iraq some breathing room. In addition, Jaafari complained that many countries continue to hold frozen Iraqi assets, which the U.S. should help to release and return to Iraq.

16. (C) USDP Edelman concurred with Jaafari that security is necessary to assure economic growth but that economic growth is necessary to pay for additional security. He told Jaafari that he was impressed by the patriotism and professionalism of the Iraqi soldiers he has meet, as well as by the close relationships evident between U.S. and Iraqi soldiers. The growth of the ISF from zero to 207,000 soldiers and police is a significant accomplishment, Edelman continued. He added that the ISF appears to be on the path to success, and their performance during the referendum is an impressive measure of their abilities and a tribute to what has been accomplished.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

17. (C) USDP Edelman agreed with Jaafari that capacity development at the Ministries of Defense and Interior to support their forces remains a key issue. Edelman said that in the future these ministries must be able to purchase needed equipment, pay their employees, and provide the resources necessary to permit investments being made today to continue to pay off in the future. The U.S., the Under Secretary noted, has experience helping other countries to

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create ministries capable of these functions -- with the Eastern European nations that have recently joined NATO being good examples. However, he stated, there are two things required of the Iraqis to successfully move forward:

-- The fight against corruption must be waged and won transparently and according to the rule of law. Iraq cannot afford waste or fraud and the disillusionment that results.

-- There must be sufficient political will in the government to devote the resources needed to adequately finance the costs of security.

Jaafari replied that the ITG is determined to fight corruption to the end. USDP Edelman reiterated that as long as the process is fair and based on the rule of law, rather than used to forward political or sectarian agendas, the U.S. will be fully supportive. Jaafari assured Edelman that the ITG policy is exactly that.

18. (C) LTG Renuart stated that developing police loyalty to Iraq and securing energy infrastructure are key issues for Generals Casey and Abizaid, and the USG will continue to work closely with the Iraqis on these issues in the period leading up to the December elections. Renuart remarked that he was impressed by the progress being made by the police forces and stressed the need to continue to inculcate new officers with loyalty to Iraq rather than to sectarian groups. He also noted the critical task of securing energy infrastructure, which will require a team effort that includes Coalition Forces, the security ministries, and other relevant ministries.

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS

19. (C) USDP Edelman asked Jaafari how the ITG plans to build upon the referendum's successful voter turnout efforts and ensure that the results of the December election will be broadly representative. Jaafari replied that the major goal of his government will remain ensuring that the people can vote in a safe and secure environment. The PM also highlighted the importance of continuing to reach out to other Arab countries to gain their support. He mentioned the recent visit of an Arab League delegation, the visit of Arab League SecGen Amr Moussa, and visits he himself is planning to other Arab capitals. "What is important is to have the goodwill of other Arab countries and to have them supporting Iraq, not the insurgency," the PM said. He also complained that both money and fighters from some Arab states feed the insurgency, while the media in other Arab states publish unhelpful stories about what is really taking place in Iraq.

110. (C) USDP Edelman asked Jaafari which countries posed the greatest problem in this respect. Jaafari replied that Syria is the number one problem, that Syria harbors terrorists who are training to come to Iraq, and that many of the foreign fighters arrested or killed in Iraq have passed through Syria. Jaafari said that Iraq is waiting for Damascus to improve its conduct regarding these foreign insurgents before developing the Iraq-Syria relationship any

further. Jaafari next mentioned Iran but qualified his statement by saying that the problems Iran caused did not compare to the problems caused by Syria. He said that Tehran denies involvement in any activities aimed at subverting Iraq but that there is evidence that fighters have crossed the border. Jaafari returned to the subject of Syria and said that the problem will get out of hand if Iraq and the U.S. do not work together closely.

TERRORIST FINANCING

11. (C) USDP Edelman raised the subject of terrorist financing. He noted that some funds that support the insurgency flow from Syria, while others are earned through criminal enterprises such as kidnapping. For this reason, he added, police capabilities must be enhanced. At the same time, Edelman suggested, Iraq should consider dealing with the problems caused by fuel subsidies -- which lead to a black market for fuel sales, the earnings from which can feed the insurgency. Rethinking fuel subsidies, the U/S explained, would also help Iraq in its dealings with the International Monetary Fund.

REMARKS TO THE PRESS

12. (C) Following his meeting with Jaafari, USDP Edelman was invited to make comments to a sizable group of Iraqi journalists who had gathered in a room nearby. He explained the reason for his trip, said he was very encouraged by what he saw with regard to the ISF's developing capabilities, and expressed pleasure to be visiting Iraq during this hopeful period immediately following the referendum. In response to a question regarding the Coalition's plans to depart Iraq, Edelman responded that the Iraqis and the Coalition have formed a joint committee to plan for the transfer of security responsibilities and that any such transfers would be conditions-based rather than driven by an arbitrarily set timeline.

13. (U) This cable was cleared by USDP Edelman.
Satterfield